QUESTION: Why did Jesus compare the people of His generation to children sitting in the marketplaces calling to one another? What did He mean by this illustration?

And what did He mean when He said:

> *Luke 7:35* – “But wisdom is justified by all her children.”

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ANSWER:

The answer to this question can be found in two sections of the Bible: Matthew 11:16-20 and Luke 7:31-35. Both of these passages provide important insight into how Jesus was teaching about the rejection of God’s messengers.

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THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Theologically, Jesus’ statement in Luke 7:35 is a profound reflection on the nature of God’s wisdom. When Jesus says,

> “Wisdom is justified by all her children,”

He is referring to the ultimate proof of God’s wisdom being the results or fruits that emerge from it the transformed lives of people who truly embrace God’s message. The “children” of wisdom are those who accept God’s truth, no matter the messenger or the method by which it is delivered.

This passage reflects a recurring biblical theme that wisdom is not about intellectual prowess but about living in accordance with God’s will. The Bible contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. The wisdom of the world often leads to pride, self-sufficiency, and rejection of divine authority, while God’s wisdom leads to humility, repentance, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

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Biblical Passages

Luke 7:31-35 offers a clear example of this. Jesus compares the people of His generation to children who are indifferent to the actions around them. In His time, people rejected both John the

Baptist and Jesus because their messages did not fit the expectations or desires of the religious leaders or the people at large.

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> *Luke 7:31-35 (NKJV):*
> *31* “And the Lord said, ‘To what then shall I compare the men of this generation? And what are they like?
> *32* They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned, and you did not weep.’
> *33* For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’
> *34* The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’
> *35* But wisdom is justified by all her children.”

This comparison underscores the spiritual apathy of the people, who rejected both the ascetic lifestyle of John (who called for repentance and a return to God’s holiness) and the inclusive, compassionate ministry of Jesus (who sought to bring sinners into the kingdom of God).

Theological Significance of Jesus’ Comparison

Jesus uses this metaphor of children to show the childishness of the people’s reactions to God’s messengers. Just like children who refuse to cooperate with any game or follow the rhythm of a song, the people of that generation rejected both the severe call to repentance through John and the invitation to grace through Jesus.

Theologically, this rejection illustrates a deep spiritual blindness. God, in His wisdom, sent two very different messengers John and Jesus each with a different approach, yet both proclaiming the same message of salvation. The people’s rejection of them illustrates a hardened heart and an unwillingness to recognize God’s wisdom in either form.

Matthew 11:16-19 – Wisdom and Its Rejection

In Matthew 11:16-19, we get a similar account, where Jesus reflects on the same truth, with a bit more detail:

> *Matthew 11:16-19 (NKJV):*
> *16* “But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children
> sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions
> *17* and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not
> dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.’
> *18* For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say,
> ‘He has a demon.’
> *19* The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say,
> ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors
> and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”

Here, Jesus makes it clear that His generation’s spiritual condition is like children who are indifferent to all forms of divine calling. Whether it was the ascetic lifestyle of John, who lived in the wilderness and called for repentance, or the social engagement of Jesus, who dined with sinners and proclaimed the kingdom of God, the people refused to respond to the truth.

Wisdom and Its Children: In the Bible, wisdom is often seen as a personification of God’s knowledge and understanding. For instance, in Proverbs 8:1-3 (NKJV), wisdom is depicted as calling out to the world:

> “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet...”

This personification of wisdom in Proverbs helps us understand that God’s wisdom is not something abstract; it is active, revealed in how He interacts with humanity, whether through judgment or mercy. When Jesus says *“Wisdom is justified by all her children,”* He is saying that those who respond to God’s truth and live out His will demonstrate that His wisdom is true.

- John the Baptist and Jesus: John and Jesus serve as contrasting messengers. John’s ministry was one of strict repentance, a call to holiness that was marked by fasting and withdrawal from worldly pleasures (Luke 7:33). Jesus, on the other hand, engaged with society, eating and drinking with sinners, showing that salvation was for all, not just the righteous (Luke 7:34).

  Both of their approaches, though different, were ordained by God. The rejection of both figures by the people reveals their

unwillingness to accept God’s will, regardless of the form it takes.

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Theologically, the rejection of God’s messengers and the dismissal of His wisdom is not a new issue it continues to affect people today. People are still prone to reject divine wisdom if it doesn’t align with their personal preferences or expectations.

Wisdom of the Cross: The apostle Paul writes about the wisdom of God being hidden in the cross of Christ, which is foolishness to those who are perishing, but the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18):

> “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
> *This passage highlights that God’s wisdom often defies human expectations. The world looks for power, wealth, and success, but God’s wisdom is shown in weakness, sacrifice, and service through the cross of Jesus.*

Judging by Fruits, Not Appearances: Jesus teaches us that the wisdom of God will be evident through the fruits it produces. In Matthew 7:16-20, Jesus says:

> “By their fruits you will know them... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.”

This principle is key for discerning true wisdom in life. We are called to evaluate ministries, servants of God, and even our own actions based on the fruit they produce whether they lead people to true repentance, salvation, and holy living, or whether they lead to sin and falsehood.

1. True Wisdom Is Revealed in Christ: Ultimately, the full revelation of God’s wisdom is seen in the person of Jesus Christ both in His life and His sacrificial death. Through His resurrection, Jesus validated God’s plan of salvation, confirming that the wisdom of God is indeed “justified by her children.” Jesus’ followers, those who live according to His teachings, are the children of wisdom.

Conclusion:

Jesus’ statement that “wisdom is justified by her children” reminds us that God’s wisdom is not dependent on external appearances or methods but is proven by the fruit it produces. Whether through ascetic living like John the Baptist or engaging with sinners like Jesus, God’s wisdom will be evident in the lives of those who respond to it and live out its teachings.

As followers of Christ today, we are called to live according to God’s wisdom, regardless of how the world may view it. Whether we are in a time of prosperity or hardship, God’s wisdom will always be justified by the lives of those who truly follow Him, showing that wisdom is seen in its transformative power, not in outward appearances.

May we always look to the fruits of God’s work in our lives and in the lives of others as the true testimony of His wisdom.

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